SERMON BY THE REVEREND JOSEPH OWEN

MARCH 8, 1846

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Joseph Owen.
Sermon.

English.

Hidden manna and
promised to Ahe

Rev. 2:17.

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.... Τῷ νικῶντι δώσω αὐτῷ τοῦ μάννα τοῦ κεκρυμμένη, καὶ δώσω αὐτῷ ψῆφον λευκὴν, καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν ψῆφον ὄνομα καινὸν γεγραμμένον, ὃ οὐδεὶς οἶδεν εἰ μὴ ὁ λαμβάνων.

To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.

The Christian life is throughout the Scriptures represented as one of activity and diligence. When spoken of in figurative language it is called a race, a

wrestling, a warfare, "so run that ye may obtain", "we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers", "fight the good fight of faith". These are figures full of meaning, denoting that we cannot enter into the straight gate without striving, and that through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God. The Christian, though himself delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, sojourns while here below in the empire of God's great adversary, is constantly exposed to the assaults of him who desires Heaven's destruction and man's eternal ruin, who goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. His lot is

often cast in places similar to that in which the church at Pergamos was situated, to whom the words of the text were addressed. The Divine Saviour, having risen from the tomb, ascended on high, and led captivity captive, continued to watch over all parts of that church which he had bought with his precious blood. He looked not only upon the believers in Palestine, the descendants of Abraham, but to those from among the Gentiles who by faith had become the spiritual seed of the father of the faithful and had been adopted into the family of God, - to the seven churches of Asia. He, the Faithful Wit... ..axaven of
Born from the dead, the eld false, perni-

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kings of the earth, who loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, with whom are "the seven spirits" or the abundant influences of the Holy Spirit to supply the wants of his church, addresses to these seven churches, collectively a message of grace and peace; and to each ~~one~~ individually an epistle adapted to its character and circumstances. The church in Pergamos was placed in circumstances peculiarly trying,— "I know— —where thou dwellest, where Satan's throne is"; in the midst of corruption, superstition, and persecution. They had remained faithful to their great Lord, though in danger of being called to seal the truth with their blood. "Thou holdest fast my name, and 'hast not denied my fa[illegible] the da[illegible] even in those about as [illegible] ess, [illegible] ma[illegible] my faithful whom he m[illegible]ter of [illegible] among you,

where Satan dwelleth." History gives us no
further account of this Antipas than what
is here recorded, but He who searches the
heart pronounced him a faithful martyr,
and, though perhaps he was an obscure in-
dividual, his Master, by recording his name
in the Scriptures of truth, has caused
his praise to be in all the churches. The
church at Pergamos, though in some things
commended, is still found wanting,—"I have
a few things against thee". Alas! how true
this is of every church, and of every individ-
ual member of the church! In that
church were "those that held the doctrine
of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast
a stumbling block before the children of
Israel", and those who held false, perni-

cious doctrines. The Lord our God is a jealous God and cannot look with allowance upon sin in his people. Jesus the Saviour, who purchased the church with his blood, desires that it should be without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, that his people should be a peculiar people, zealous of good works. So long as they live in this world they must endure temptation and conflict; and "blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him". The whole life of the believer here below must be one of conflict, he cannot escape it unless he yield to the enemy or leave the world. But the great Intercessor prays thus: "I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of

the world, but that Thou shouldst keep them from the evil." Our only alternative is to contend, or give ourselves up to certain destruction, for the enemy against whom we are to wage war gives no quarter, and is satisfied with nothing short of our utter ruin. The Captain of our salvation will also contend against us unless we are ~~sober~~ vigilant and diligent. Hear his startling message to the people at Pergamos: "Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against thee with the sword of my mouth. This all-powerful sword, even his mighty word, who can resist? Can a feeble worm for a moment stand against that word that called the universe out of nothing, that said, Let there be light, and there was light, that spake and it was done, that commanded, and it stood fast? Woe to him

that contendeth with his Maker!" "The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit". Let us then beware of that luke-warmness and sloth which shall provoke the Mighty Redeemer to make war against us with the sharp two edged sword of his mouth. His promise is large and free to those who contend faithfully and successfully. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it."
Here is described the precious reward that shall be given to him who is

successful in the Christian warfare. This is a warfare the weapons of which are not carnal but spiritual. It is one too which we cannot delegate others to fight for us. Every Christian, whatever be his worldly rank or profession, must engage personally in this war, and cannot with safety lay aside his weapons until called from the scene of action by his great Commander. It is a difficult one, requiring true courage, true bravery. Many have fought with honour the battles of their country, not fearing to face the cannon's mouth, who alas! had not courage to enlist in the army of King Jesus. This struggle is difficult because we have to turn and fight against ourselves, against the "old man" which we are required to put off, against the "body of sin and death", from which we are to

seek deliverance. We are not only to keep ourselves in subjection, but to "crucify the flesh, with the affections and lusts," utterly put ~~them~~ all our sinful propensities & desires to death. "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, so that we cannot do the things that we would". Too often do we find a law that when we would do good evil is present with us. Though we delight in the law of God after the inward man, yet we see another law in our members warring against the law of our mind, and bringing us into captivity to the law of sin which is in our members. This is a struggle in which we ~~should~~ must certainly be overcome if left to go forward in our own strength. It is only through the <u>Spirit</u> that we can mortify the deeds of the body. While without the Saviour we can do nothing, we can,

through Christ strengthening us, do all things. When the great apostle Paul, at one stage of his Christian warfare, was troubled with a messenger of Satan to buffet him, in answer to his earnest entreaties for deliverance he received the comforting assurance "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Without this strength we are indeed powerless, but ~~in~~ ~~it~~ sustained and supported by it.

"We on the field of battle sing,
And triumph while we fight."

We are commanded to be strong, not in ourselves, ~~but brave~~ but in ~~in~~ the Lord, and in the power of his might ~~his mighty power~~. Behold the mighty foes that are arrayed against us! The world, the flesh, and the devil; the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Each Christian has his peculiar temptations, trials, and dangers, arising from his pecul-

in disposition &c circumstances. Every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset him he must lay aside. When assailed by these hosts the command comes forth, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong". Though our foes be mighty, a stronger than they is with us, and if he be for us, who can be against us! Let us then willingly and cheerfully put on the whole armour of God, that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. A description of this panoply is given in Eph. 6:11–18, which every Christian should frequently read and prayerfully ponder. "Stand, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the

Spirit, which is the word of God: praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit". Our Glorious Leader has not only commanded us to fight, but has himself set an illustrious example for our imitation. Forty days and forty nights he was tempted by Satan, and never yielded to sin; He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. To the tempter's wicked suggestions He replied in the language of the word of God, and thus vanquished the adversary by the sword of the Spirit. Relying on His strength we may at all times say with a power that the enemy shall feel, and to which he must yield, "Get thee behind me, Satan". He can impart to us that valour by which we shall conquer ourselves and tread the world beneath our feet, become divested of pride and clothed with humility, and our

affections be taken from earthly things and set on things above. To do this a man's soul must be full of courage. He is the brave soldier that can endure to go contrary to public opinion for the sake of what is right; that can, for Christ's sake, bear a sneer or jeer or to be despised; that is willing for the sake of God's truth to be called a fanatick, a heretick, a coward, or a dunce. Too many are there who bear the name of soldier, and who have bravely conquered others, ~~that~~ have never yet succeeded in conquering themselves, who have courage to face the formidable front of an army, and yet cannot, for the sake of Christ, ~~cannot~~ face a sneer. So long as we live in this world we dwell where Satan's seat is, for he is the god of this world, he regulates the opinions and practices of the mass of its inhabitants, ~~most people~~, and to these all who would live godly in Christ Jesus must be opposed. To go with the multi-

tude is not safe, ~~is not~~ unless it can be proved that that multitude is walking according to the word of God. Believe not every opinion, follow not every practice, but first try them whether they are pleasing to God. Let us be willing to be thought singular, provided our practice or opinions be sanctioned by a Thus saith the Lord. Believers in all ages have been obliged to stem the current of worldly fashions and sentiments, and hence have been accused of attempting to turn the world upside down and walking contrary to all men. Many of our fathers in Great Britain, men of whom the world was not worthy, were considered very singular people while they sought out truth by the light of the stake; and

"Must we be carried to the skies,
On flowery beds of ease,
While others fought to win the prize,
And sailed through bloody seas"?

To those who are successful in this warfare a great reward is promised in our text: "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna". It is not necessary here to inquire into the derivation of the term *manna*, whether it come from a Hebrew term meaning *portion*, or whether it indicate the interrogation made by the children of Israel when they first saw it, - "*what is it now*, for they wist not what it was". The idea alluded to is, *bread from heaven*, for with bread from heaven God fed his chosen people, ~~in number about two millions, for~~ forty years in the wilderness. That however was visible food given to the visible church, here in the text is invisible food promised to the invisible church. To those who were Israelites after the flesh was given visible heavenly food; to those who are Israelites indeed in whom there is no guile, who are Israels in spirit, princes that

have power with God and with man, and prevail, shall be imparted invisible heavenly food,—"To him that <u>overcometh</u> will I give to eat of the hidden manna". The manna was doubtless, like many of God's other dispensations to the Jews, typical and deeply significant. The church was then in its infancy, and needed to be taught spiritual truths by outward emblems. Hence, subsequent to the giving of the manna, the tabernacle was set up with its whole apparatus, the altar of burnt offering, the laver, the altar of incense, the priesthood, the golden candlestick, the ark of the covenant and the cherubim. These were all intended to teach truths of vital importance to the church. The giving of the manna also ~~no doubt~~ had a meaning beyond that of merely supplying the temporal wants of the Israelites. The explanation of it was afterwards thus given by Moses [Deut. 8:3]: "And

he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live". The manna then was to teach that the immortal spirit of man cannot be satisfied with any thing earthly or temporal, but only by influences from the Father of spirits, the eternal God, the Source and Giver of all good. The "hidden manna" therefore means the invisible influences of the Holy Spirit entering the heart, and enlightening, strengthening, rectifying, and supporting the soul. These influences are hidden from the outward view of man, and known from delightful experience only to the believer himself. They impart to his mind a joy with which a stranger doth not

intermeddle, which the world can neither give nor take away. ~~Is his mind dark? light breaks in upon him from on high;~~ In darkest shades, if the Holy Spirit appear, light from on high breaks in upon the soul and dissipates every cloud; does the believer need instruction and guidance? the Divine Spirit is present, ready to lead him into the way of all truth; does guilt rest on his conscience? the same blessed Paraclete directs him to the great Mediator through whose blood ~~the~~ hearts may be sprinkled from an evil conscience. When struggling against a particular temptation the same friendly Monitor is nigh to watch his progress and impart assistance; and if the issue of the conflict be successful, so that he overcomes, then does hidden manna, the sweetest and most delicious, descend in fresh supplies to cheer and comfort his soul. Hence we see that the Christian life, though difficult by reason of the natural corruption still remaining in

the hearts of believers, is yet a very pleasant one, that, in the highest sense, wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. While the way of the wicked is as darkness, and they know not at what they stumble, the path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth brighter and brighter unto the perfect day. Christ's service is called a yoke, and so, indeed, it is to corrupt nature, but He renders it easy to him whose inward man delights in the divine law. The joy of Jehovah is the strength of his people, and in Him they can rejoice always. This joy may even be mingled with the tears of repentance, and, paradoxical as it may appear to those who have not duly considered this important ~~attended to this~~ subject, ~~subject~~, the most deeply seated joy is in that heart that exercises the deepest godly sorrow. This hidden manna sustains the soul, and imparts to all its

Lord. Are we in this noble army to whom

[illegible]

exercises a calm and peace which Heaven alone can bestow. Through all his pilgrimage here below the Christian is fed with this hidden manna, up to the very time when he passes the river of death and enters the Heavenly Canaan. Every day he needs a fresh supply, and hence in this, as well as in a temporal sense, should pray, Give us this day our daily bread. When at last the conflict shall be ended and heaven won, when he shall be able to say "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness", and shall with rapture and surprise find himself in the abodes of the blessed among the spirits of just men

the hearts of believers, is yet a very pleasant

[illegible]

made perfect, then shall he receive from the great God directly infinite supplies of joy.

"Go wing thy flight from star to star,
From world to luminous world, as far
As the universe spreads its flaming wall;
Take all the pleasures of all the spheres,
And multiply each through endless years,
One minute of Heaven is worth them all!"

In God's presence is fulness of joy, and at his right hand are pleasures forevermore. This shall be the consummation of those supplies of hidden manna which the victorious soldier of the cross receives. How insignificant will all the trials of his warfare appear when the welcome is pronounced, Well done good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy

Lord. Are we in this noble army to whom the great Captain of Salvation gives to eat of the hidden manna? Let us search and try ourselves, for the heart is deceitful above all things, and may persuade us that our names have been enrolled, when we have no part nor lot in the matter.
"To him that overcometh" a further promise is made, of "a white stone, and a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it". Allusion may here be made to the custom observed by judges in ancient times, particularly among the Greeks, of giving their suffrages by black and white pebbles. Those who gave in the black stones were for condemning the person accused, and those who gave the white were for his absolution. This is mentioned by a Roman poet, whose words are thus rendered into verse by one of our old

English poets:

"A custom was of old, and still remains,
Which life or death by suffrages ordains:
White stones and black within an urn are cast.
The first absolve, but fate is in the last".*

If this be alluded to, then by the white stone is meant absolution from the guilt of sin; and by "the new name" the name of adoption, since adopted persons took the name of the family into which they were introduced ~~adoption~~. None can read the evidence of a man's adoption but himself; he cannot always read it; but if he persevere, he shall have both the evidence of son-ship, and the inheritance.

More probably ~~Perhaps~~ however there is an allusion here to conquerors in the public games, who

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* Mos erat antiquis, niveis atrisque lapillis,
His damnare reos, illis absolvere culpa.
Nunc quoque sic lata est sententia tristis.
Ovid, Met. Lib. XV. 41.

were not only conducted with great pomp into the city to which they belonged, but had a <u>white</u> <u>stone</u> given to them, with <u>their</u> <u>name</u> <u>inscribed</u> <u>on</u> <u>it</u>; and this token or ticket entitled them, during their whole life, to be maintained at the public expense. If this custom be alluded to, then by the <u>white</u> <u>stone</u> it would be natural to understand the <u>earnest</u> <u>of</u> <u>the</u> <u>Spirit</u>, the Holy Spirit given to him that overcometh, as the pledge and first fruits of his inheritance on high. This witness of the Spirit shows us a new name, for "the Spirit beareth witness with our spirits that we are the <u>children</u> <u>of</u> <u>God</u>". Our old name was, "child of wrath", "child of the devil"; but the new name is, "child of God". None can read this name but he that receiveth

it. The believer has a name written in his heart by the witness of the Spirit which no other man can read. He himself cannot ~~himself~~ always read it, but by giving all diligence to make his calling and election sure he may attain to the full assurance of the understanding, of faith, and of hope. Not only is his soul acquitted in the sight of God, absolved in virtue of Christ's suretiship from all the demands of a violated law and offended justice, so that he has peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ, but he has a delightful sense of this in his own heart, he joys in God through the Lord Jesus Christ by whom he has received the atonement. The Spirit enables him to know in whom he has believed, and sheds abroad the love of God in his heart, causes him with admiring

gratitude to behold the infinite love of God to him in particular. He has faith to ~~believe that~~ the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin, and that though his sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. Thus is his mind pervaded by a peace that passeth all understanding, for he knows in whom he has believed and is persuaded that He is able to keep that which he has committed to Him against that day. As the white stone with the name written on it entitled the conqueror to ~~be maintained~~ maintenance during the whole of his life, so does the witness of the Spirit in the heart of a believer, testifying that he is a child

of God, entitle him to all the treasures of his Father's house. He has a title to all that is needful for him, ~~all things are his~~ and all things shall work together for his good. He has become joint-heir with Christ to the infinite possessions of his Father. All things are his, whether the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come. God is his God, all his perfections are engaged for his benefit, his wisdom to direct, his power to protect, his grace to supply, sustain, and uphold; in short, all the divine attributes harmonize and rejoice in recognizing the white stone, and the new name written upon it, placed by the Redeemer in the hearts of his people. The conscious possession of this enables the Christian to rejoice with joy un-

speakable and full of glory. This token shall never be taken from him, but shall bring him into the full and everlasting possession of heavenly bliss, into the enjoyment of the Triune God, to see as he is seen, to know as he is known, to be like God, and to dwell forever in the beatifick vision of Him who is heaven's life and joy. Surely then to possess this white stone and new name is worth all our efforts. How utterly worthless are all the ~~tawdry~~ vanities of earth when compared with this! The fashion, the scene, the stage-play of this world passeth away, but oh! who among us shall inherit the true riches? Let us search and try

ourselves, examine ourselves ~~to~~ and see whether we be in the faith. In the great assize to which we are all hastening there shall be no respect of persons, wealth or rank can there do nothing for us, only the possession of this white stone and this new name can secure for us an entrance into God's everlasting kingdom. This hidden manna has fed martyrs in the midst of the flames, the witness of the Spirit has enabled them there to sing hymns of praise, and the conscious possession of this new name has enabled them to work righteousness, obtain promises, to be stoned, sawn asunder, slain with the sword, to be destitute, afflicted, tormented. The

fires of persecution could not burn up the manna with which they were fed from heaven, nor disfigure the white stone, nor obliterate their name from upon it. Thrice blessed shall we be if we so contend as to obtain this heavenly prize!

Preached in the Mission Church at the Jumna, Sab. eve. March 8th 1846, the evening of the baptism of my dear son Henry James. Oct. 26th 1851.